

Marissa Loya

Redmond Junior High

8th Grade

Age 13

“When he seeks opportunity, he is told, in effect, to lift himself by his own bootstraps, advice which does not take into account the fact that he is barefoot” (King9). Martin Luther King Jr. wrote this about the struggle African-Americans faced, and then dedicated his entire life to freeing them from this social and economic oppression. He did so much for not just black citizens, but for the entire United States, and inspired thousands of people to help others. He had a dream about a different, better world, worded towards this dream, but he also knew this world could not be achieved unless everyone asked themselves “life’s most persistent and urgent question: ‘What are you doing for others?’”

Throughout his life, King was completely devoted to his movement, was extremely influential in the movement all over the nation and did whatever it took to achieve his goals. He was arrested over twenty times, participated in numerous marches and boycotts, spoke hundreds of times to the public, published several articles and books, won various awards and managed to change the entire U.S. in the process. One of his first major accomplishments concerning the Civil Rights Movement was a colossal bus boycott. The boycott was non-violent, lasted for 382 day in Montgomery, and was organized by the Montgomery Improvement Association. At the end of the boycott, in December 1965, the Supreme Court declared segregation laws concerning buses unconstitutional. Another accomplishment was the movement in Birmingham, Alabama. In this area he didn’t just want to end one particular example of racism, he wanted many of the segregationist laws made illegal, regardless of the fierce opposition King and his organization faced from “Bull” Connor and other segregationists with power in the local government. Bull Connor and the Birmingham police implemented every tool they could to attempt to beat down the marchers, including hoses, dogs, and imprisoning the blacks who marched, but nothing could stop them from trying to make this nation a better place for future generations of all races. Finally, Birmingham officials desegregated lunch counters, restrooms, fitting rooms and drinking fountains, business owners agreed to stop discriminating and hire black workers, and protestors who were imprisoned during the marches were freed and compensating. These results, from both the bus boycott and the protest, along with everything else Martin Luther King Jr. did, helped many other areas of the nation end racism.

Martin Luther King Jr. did more than most, but everyone can do something to help others. He had a dream about a world where everyone helped everyone else, regardless of their race, gender, or any other possible thing people could be discriminated by. Unfortunately, King's America doesn't exist yet. Over all, the United States has come a long way, and there are many philanthropists, but there aren't enough. There are still people who bully and hurt others for things they can't help. There are still dictators, terrorists, and fights between countries over pointless things. No one stops to think and ask themselves "what am I doing for others?" Personally, I have been able to volunteer in a few local charity and school events, along with everyday things such as babysitting my somewhat financially struggling neighbor's children and helping classmates with their school work when they are struggling. Even in our military, where the soldiers put their lives in each other's hands every day, there were laws prohibiting people from coming out to the people they often feel closets to as homosexual. At the same time, in the same army and all over the U.S. Islamic, Muslim and other people with non-Christian religious beliefs are assaulted, just because they have different beliefs. In Martin's world, Christian, Muslim, black, white, and everyone else would all work together to make peace with each other and help the poor in third world countries, instead of fighting for the ability to say they have the "right" religion, or country. If just once a day, everyone took a moment to help someone else, anything from helping another student with a math problem they don't understand, to donating money to a charity, then we would be one step closer to Martin's world, and answering one of life's most pressing questions, we would be one step closer to a viable utopia.

Martin believed that "civil disobedience...required consequences that ought to be borne by the disobedient" (Jones, 46). He thought that it didn't matter that they were fighting for freedom, if they were not punished according to the law; the public wouldn't see how unfair the government was. Before him, during his time and even now, whenever there is a protest, one of the first demands the protestors make is that they will not receive punishment for their actions. Along with being wrong, since the law is there for a reason, even if it's unconstitutional, it also doesn't show the public that the protestors are right and the law is unfair. This belief sent him to jail many times, instead

of paying a fine, regardless of the fact that he was strictly a non-violent protestor and had the right to free speech and the right to assemble.

King's legacy lives on today, including the dream he had for our country. Many people still believe in it and try to follow in his footsteps, yet there aren't enough of these people. If more people asked themselves what they were doing for others, then our country could get rid of racism, segregation and prejudice. Without them, America could focus on our ideals, and helping others. We could help change our allied countries, countries we are neutral towards and we could change the world. Help start this change by asking yourself life's most persistent and urgent question every day, and encourage others to ask themselves: "what am I doing for others?"

Bibliography

Jones, Clarence. What Would Martin Say? New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.
Print

King, Martin. Why We can't Wait. New York: Signet Classic, 1963. Print.

"Martin Luther King – Biography". Nobelprize.org. The Nobel Foundation, 1964.
Website. November12, 2011

Works Cited

Jones, Clarence. What Would Martin Say? New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.
Print.